

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

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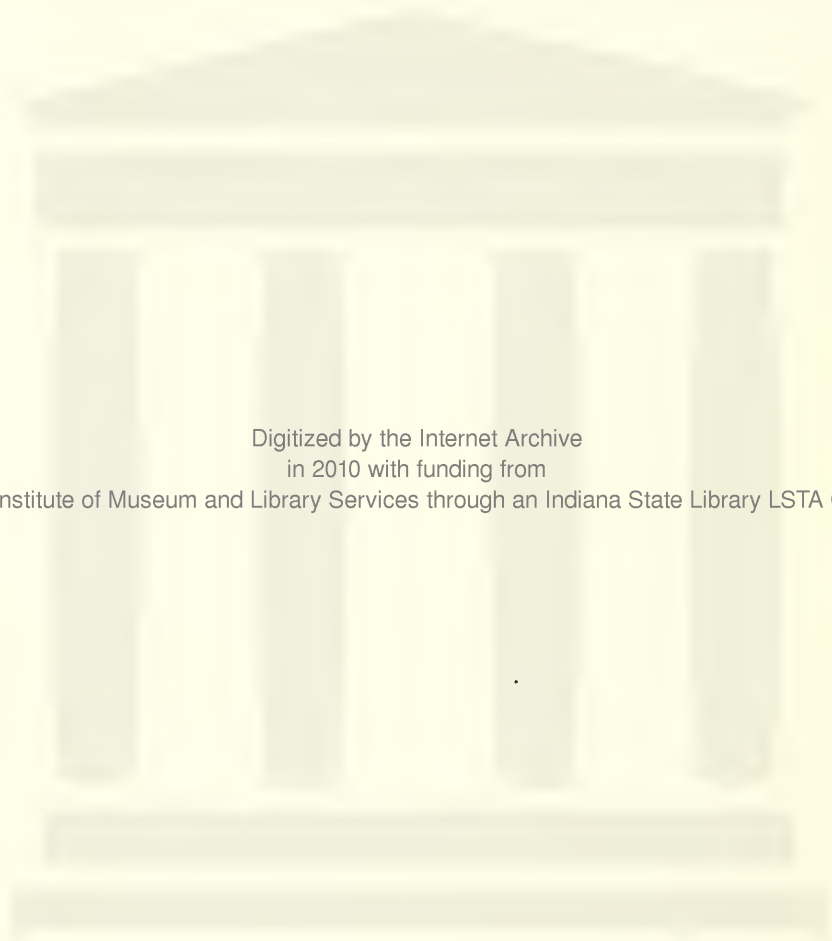
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BY

ALTON B. PARKER

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ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

In attempting, on the one hundredth anniversary of his birth, to deal with the character of Abraham Lincoln we shall do well to consider its inherent simplicity convinced that, in this old-fashioned quality, we shall discover power for dealing with great problems, which, though they seemed complex, were in reality plain and single-minded. As we study the times through which he passed, nothing is clearer than the fact that, do what our predecessors upon this scene would: people a continent, clear the forests, break the prairies, settle the waste places, lay the foundations for material growth and prosperity, develop their industries, establish their schools, build their churches—they were, after all, restricted in their public thought to one question. There was one thorn in the political flesh, and it produced a sense of pain which was never lost, nor even lulled for a moment. Whether moral or economic, or both, it is not now necessary either to discuss or to settle, but it was never out of the thought of any order of our people in any State or Territory of the Union. That it was there was universally recognized, and that its removal was desirable was nowhere doubted, but the method of doing this, or that the patient could stand it, however done, were questions upon which it is doubtful whether many men within our borders would have agreed.

When the importance of this great operation is considered, it is not surprising that there should have sprung up around the career of Lincoln—legend, myth and story, which tend to obscure the true, the real, man. Already, within less than half a century, we are in danger of losing sight of the plain, unobtrusive human figure who really worked, lived, and walked among us and of substituting for him an unhistoric, impossible wizard who had only to wave some mystic wand in order at once to relieve a suf-

fering people of all their ills, present or future. While there was in the North a general recognition of the necessity for removing slavery, there seems to have grown up an indefinable impression, that when this was over, all had been done and we were to go forward henceforth without problems or the necessity for struggle.

Thus, there has been read into the achievements of Lincoln the gloss that his one great act had settled all questions both for his own time and the future and that, in some mysterious way, he had become the potent physician for all political and social maladies. It became clear, in due time, that the removal of obvious ailments did not wholly eradicate disease, that the health of a nation, like that of an individual, depended upon eternal vigilance both to cure and to prevent, and that conjuring in the name of a man who had done one great thing did not ward off national and social perils.

It is my purpose to treat, as simply as I may, the inherent qualities of this man, to trace briefly his career on its broader lines, and to show how truly he represents our American traditions and character. In attempting this task, I shall quote somewhat freely from his own words in the hope that some of my hearers may enter upon that profitable and deeper study of the principles and policies which, moving him, in all his actions, made him what he was, and enabled him to do his duty as he saw it day by day during a period of the severest storm and stress.

ORIGIN AND EARLY ENVIRONMENTS.

The story of Lincoln's ancestry and birth has become almost legendary. Ever since some of his youthful co-workers carried into an Illinois political convention, two of the fence rails made by him in his boyish days, there has been dangled before the eyes of American youth that ideal of the Presidency and all the other possibilities of fame and fortune as the special prerogatives of the poor.

The real truth is that his rise is no different from that of men from the earliest days of history—not that of our own country alone, but of humanity itself. Coming, on both sides, out of an ancestry of industrious and courageous men and chaste, God-fearing women, uniting in himself the qualities of such families, drawn from both the North and the South, he was in no sense an accident.

In these days there is a tendency to ignore or to overlook the qualities which made the real American pioneers—the men and women who descended from adventurous and independent progenitors, began the development of a type which was new to the world. In the main, these men and women had achieved the narrow literary training incident to their time in every modern country. Generally they could read and write, they could think within the limits of their needs, and, best of all, they could feel. Perhaps no people in all the history of mankind knew better how to help others while helping themselves, or had developed in a better degree that independence which is a higher achievement than luxury, or even the physical comfort upon which we now so much pride ourselves.

The man whose career we are studying illustrated these qualities. It was not the question of being compelled, from his earliest days, to support himself and of helping his parents and friends, but of doing these because they were duties before they had become necessities. It was less important to acquire the rudiments of learning by the light of a pine knot, or by the open fire, after the day's labors were ended, than it was to realize that it was incumbent upon him to get them how and when he might. It was equally his duty to work with greater effect than his fellows, because thereby he was only employing to the best the powers that God had given him. It was not for him to be dandled and coddled into usefulness—simply because in the course of time he was to come to great power—any more than it was for

his less gifted associates to fail in their duty in that state of life into which it had pleased God to call them.

We are not, then, dealing with some slum product of a modern city in which perhaps a thin and disordered blood, an obscure and starved ancestry and parentage, the helpless, hopeless pauperism of uncounted generations of idleness and uselessness, of vice and crime, are to be considered. We have to do with one drawn from the strong, virile race of men who, shirking no duty, lived out of doors, hewed and plowed, or sowed and reaped their way to physical and mental health and, being the best, survived all the perils of savages, of flood and rude travel, of fevers and the hard conditions incident to obedience to the command to "be fruitful, replenish the earth and subdue it."

It was, then, no accident that led Abraham Lincoln on from farm to farm, from wood to wood, and, finally, from State to State into the boundless prairie. Each movement was a step forward, drawing him into one business venture after another and always into mental and moral progress, each successive upward step being the reward of his own energy and ingenuity. Wherever he went he did not meet or expect ideal conditions, but the best and most intelligent people that could be found were good enough for him, and it was both his duty and his pleasure to fit himself for each step in his slow progress.

ENTRANCE INTO PUBLIC LIFE.

With such ancestry, beginnings, and training, Abraham Lincoln found himself, at the early age of twenty-five, a member of the Legislature of Illinois. He was thus ushered into that public life which was his earliest ambition. He showed no desire, either then or at any other time in his life, for mere financial success. After his industry had enabled him to reach the goal of personal independence, he showed himself prudent and thrifty;

helpful, in the modest way of his time, to others ; fearful of debt ; without either desire or intention of making any show ; and perfectly free to devote himself to the chosen purposes of life, his profession, the steady acquisition of knowledge, and to politics.

He conducted his canvasses with energy and spirit, studied the art of reaching the people as effectively as possible, put himself into close relations with the party spirit of his day, measured himself in each succeeding campaign against stronger men, spoke in the Legislature with considerable freedom, as became the habits of his day, maintained a position of dignity, taking up new and broader questions until when his few years of service were over, he had made it a part of his education and his life.

In the meantime, he had grown steadily in the practice of his profession until his position in his community, the then modest capital of a new State, was assured. He shirked no duty that belonged to him, asserted no authority that he could not maintain by right, and at thirty, triumphing over all difficulties seeming or real was fully equipped for any fate that might await a man. He was not only a serious-minded man but often a sad one, sometimes a disconsolate one. But, as he had overcome physical difficulties and trials, so he conquered the faults and weaknesses of temperament.

Curiously enough, he had not passed this youthful period before he looked upon himself as an old man—one who had passed through so many phases of growth and character as to entitle others still younger to push him aside. It was the custom of the day to give every man his turn in public life, and so Lincoln disappeared from view for some years. In 1846, when he was thirty-seven, his party cast about for a candidate for Congress in a district deemed hopeless. The opposing candidate was Peter Cartwright—the most famous of all pioneer preachers—so that, in the hope of carrying the dis-

trict, Lincoln was the first and last choice. He was successful by an ample majority and served a single term of two sessions, beginning in December, 1847, and ending March 4, 1849. There has been a tendency to belittle or overlook this phase of Lincoln's public life. Considering all the circumstances, it was a wonderfully interesting as well as a successful episode in his life—a fitting introduction to the wider career upon which he then entered.

There was nothing assertive or sensational in this service but, in looking over the records, one finds that this new and unknown member was able to command assignment to the Committee on Post Offices and Post Roads—perhaps in recognition of his brief experience as a country Postmaster—and that he reported to the House several bills and resolutions. But this did not exhaust his energies or activities. In the course of debate he made eight speeches, measuring himself against several experienced members and always with credit.

It would be absolutely impossible for any man of like age and experience to obtain, in the present day, anything approaching such recognition, so that when he retired in due course an "old man," as he confessed himself, having reached the mature age of forty, it was to take his place, in his growing State and section, as a recognized political figure. His name was not a household word, he had taken nothing by storm, but thenceforth he was called upon in every crisis which demanded the services of a studious, strong, ready speaker. In 1856, as one of the organizers of an aggressive new party, he became a candidate for United States Senator and accepted defeat with characteristic resignation and graciousness.

THE DEBATE WITH DOUGLAS AND SEQUEL.

Then, as ever, he was patient, and, though conscious of his deserts, willing to bide his time which was about to come. He had early taken a strong, though conservative, position on the slavery question best exemplified by

his protest in 1837 against a legislative resolution. He and a colleague united in declaring their belief that "the institution of slavery is founded on both injustice and bad policy; but that the promulgation of abolition doctrines tends rather to increase than abate its evils." In these words will be found the key to his position during the remainder of his life and nothing could move him from it. He never abandoned either of the policies involved in this declaration and they were to give him, in due time, the support that he needed.

The one confident, well-entrenched public figure of his time was Stephen A. Douglas as Senator from Illinois. Strong, confident, overbearing in his personal position and attitude, and yet a born compromiser, he had been able fairly to hold the balance in his party upon the slavery question—then become the only one in politics. Ambitious, resourceful, drawing his supporters with hooks of steel, he was one of the most virile figures ever seen in our larger public life. While the contest was plainly hopeless it was necessary to confront this successful man with the best that his opponents could muster and Lincoln stood ready for the work.

The sequel was the most characteristic contest thus far seen in all our history. Whatever else may come, whatever the changes of our politics, there can never be another such political tourney. The time, the men, the single issue which then divided our people, the public interest and excitement—these may be simulated but they cannot be reproduced. American politics will never see another Douglas-Lincoln debate, or anything fairly resembling it. It was the outcome of peculiar social conditions. It was more than politics, for our fathers, these hardy pioneers—it was the drama carried into real life and represented by two unsurpassed actors. It brought immediate success to Douglas, enduring fame to Lincoln, and forced to a settlement the issue which they debated with so much spirit and candor. "A house

divided against itself cannot stand; I believe this government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free"—the famous declaration of Lincoln—was to become the watchword of a people, assert itself on many a battlefield and find acceptance in every part of a great country.

The rest of the story is logical—a necessity of the nature of things. It was inevitable that the man who had turned a great and dangerous movement into conservative lines, had inspired the halting, curbed the unreasonable, and brought them both upon the same platform should be their chosen leader in a period of crisis. The time had come when the pioneer mind was to find recognition and, through the mists of party, we can now see that Lincoln was its prophet. Looking back over our history it is surprising, in how many cases we can perceive that, in the day of need, some leader has arisen in the country, or in a State, or even in a city, certainly in an army, whose merits were obvious and who, in the nature of events, has been brought to the front. That such a one was necessary, the only man, it would be difficult to maintain but it would be impossible, in most instances, to choose the alternative name.

Whether any other man's leadership could have preserved the Union we know not; only this we do know: Lincoln's did.

THE STRUGGLE FOR THE UNION.

The war which came like a blinding, sudden, blow produced its moment of hesitation, its hour of thought, its day of preparation. For nearly a half century, the verdict of history has been unfriendly to Secretary Seward and his fame because within a month after the inauguration of Lincoln, he insisted that there was no fixed or settled policy and yet his famous letter contained the one declaration which showed that he had risen high above all the limitations of party or of theory. "Change the ques-

tion before the public," he said, "from one upon slavery, or about slavery for a question upon Union or disunion. In other words, from what would be regarded as a party question to one of patriotism or union." Whatever the origin or the influence of this declaration, it was in line with Lincoln's own ideas. As early as August, 1856, he had said as an answer to the extreme advocates of the right of secession. "We do not want to disrupt the Union: you shall not" and the preservation of the Union now became the one purpose of the man in power. From the beginning his party was discarded, the extreme advocates of the abolition of slavery were sent about their business, and, as we can now plainly see, every effort was concentrated upon arousing support for the Union. Every speech and letter, every act of the President emphasizes this idea. It found its fullest expression in the famous letter of August 22, 1862, to Horace Greeley—a declaration worthy of study again and again by those who would understand the philosophy of Lincoln. He said:

"I would save the Union. I would save it in the shortest way under the Constitution. The sooner the national authority can be restored, the nearer the Union will be the 'Union it was.' If there be those who would not save the Union unless they could at the same time save slavery, I do not agree with them. If there be those who would not save the Union unless they could at the same time destroy slavery, I do not agree with them. My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union, and is not either to save or to destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing any slaves, I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing all the slaves, I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone, I would also do that. What I do about slavery and the colored race, I do because I believe it helps the Union; and what I forbear, I forbear because I do not believe it would help to save the Union. I shall do less whenever I believe what I am doing hurts the cause, and I shall do more whenever I shall believe doing more will help the cause. I shall try to correct errors when shown to be errors, and I shall adopt new views so fast as they shall appear to be true views."

He watched with anxious solicitude the effect of this policy and only nine days before the issue of the Eman-

cipation Proclamation he said of the Union soldiers from the border slave states: "Every day increases their Union feeling. They are getting their pride aroused." While welcoming criticism he never failed to rebuke those among his most assertive friends who reproached him for his hesitation in accepting the policies advocated by the extremists. On November 24, 1862, he wrote as follows to Carl Schurz:

"I have just received and read your letter of the 20th. The purport of it is that we lost the late elections and the Administration is failing because the war is unsuccessful, and that I must not flatter myself that I am not justly to blame for it. I certainly know that if the war fails, the Administration fails, and that I will be blamed for it, whether I deserve it or not. And I ought to be blamed if I could do better. You think I could do better; therefore, you blame me already. I think I could not do better; therefore I blame you for blaming me. I understand you now to be willing to accept the help of men who are not Republicans, provided they have 'heart in it.' Agreed. I want no others. But who is to be the judge of hearts, or of 'heart in it?' If I must discard my own judgment and take yours, I must also take that of others; and by the time I should reject all I should be advised to reject, I should have none left, Republicans or others—not even yourself. For be assured, my dear sir, there are men who have 'heart in it' that think you are performing your part as poorly as you think I am performing mine."

Although the Emancipation Proclamation was issued on January 1, 1863, he seems never at any time to have looked upon it as a political finality, or as more than a military policy or necessity. He continued his appeals for the Union whatever might be the fate of slavery. On October 5, 1863, he wrote to Mr. Drake and others of Missouri, as follows:

"We are in civil war. In such cases there always is a main question; but in this case that question is a perplexing compound—Union and slavery. It thus becomes a question not of two sides merely, but of at least four sides, even among those who are for the Union, saying nothing of those who are against it. Thus, those who are for the Union with, but not without, slavery—those for it without, but not with—those for it with or without, but prefer it with—and those for it with or without, but prefer it without.

"Among these again is a subdivision of those who are for gradual, but not for immediate, and those who are for immediate, but not for gradual, extinction of slavery. It is easy to conceive that all these shades of opinion, and even more, may be sincerely entertained by honest and truthful men. Yet all being for the Union, by reason of these differences each will prefer a different way of sustaining the Union. At once sincerity is questioned, and motives are assailed. Actual war coming, blood grows hot, and blood is spilled. Thought is forced from old channels into confusion. Deception breeds and thrives. Confidence dies and universal suspicion reigns. Each man feels an impulse to kill his neighbor, lest he be first killed by him. Revenge and retaliation follow.

"And all this, as before said, may be among honest men only; but this is not all. Every foul bird comes abroad and every dirty reptile rises up. These add crime to confusion. Strong measures deemed indispensable, but harsh at best, such men make worse by maladministration. Murders for old grudges, and murders for pelf, proceed under any cloak that will best cover for the occasion. These causes amply account for what has occurred in Missouri, without ascribing it to the weakness or wickedness of any general."

But the most remarkable fact is that even before the Emancipation Proclamation he was continually advocating the old Colonization policy which had for many years been a distinguishing doctrine of Henry Clay and some of the Southern Whigs. On August 14, 1862, in an address to negroes on this question, after presenting the view in question he added:

"Your race is suffering, in my judgment, the greatest wrong inflicted on any people. But, even if you cease to be slaves, you are yet far removed from being placed on an equality with the white race. You are cut off from many of the advantages which the other race enjoys. The aspiration of men is to enjoy equality with the best when free, but on this broad continent not a single man of your race is made the equal of a single man of ours. Go where you are treated best and the ban is still upon you. I do not propose to discuss this, but to present it as a fact with which we have to deal. I cannot alter it if I would. It is a fact about which we all think and feel alike, I and you."

Even more commanding in importance than any of these are his efforts to promote emancipation by compensation for the value of slaves. He consistently favored the application of this principle to the border States

and the portions of the revolted States excepted from the operations of the Proclamation, still adhering to his declared policy that the one thing to be done was the preservation of the Union without any relation to the existence of slavery itself. So persistent was he in this idea that on February 5, 1865, only four weeks before his inauguration for a second term, he prepared the draft of a message to Congress in which he proposed to apply this principle of compensation to the States still in arms against Federal authority. The war was then practically at an end, resistance having ceased over a considerable part of the seceded States. In spite of this, he adhered to his idea, as is shown in the following suggested draft for a joint resolution of Congress and for a proclamation based upon it:

"Fellow citizens of the Senate and House of Representatives: I respectfully recommend that a joint resolution, substantially as follows, be adopted as soon as practicable by your honorable bodies. Resolved, by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America, in Congress assembled, That the President of the United States is hereby empowered, in his discretion, to pay \$400,000,000 to the States of Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and West Virginia, in the manner and on the conditions following, to wit: The payment to be made in six per cent. government bonds, and to be distributed among said States pro rata on their respective slave populations as shown by the census of 1860, and no part of said sum to be paid unless all resistance to the national authority shall be abandoned and cease, on or before the first day of April next; and upon such abandonment and ceasing of resistance one-half of said sum to be paid in manner aforesaid, and the remaining half to be paid only upon the amendment of the National Constitution recently proposed by Congress becoming valid law, on or before the first day of July next, by the action thereon of the requisite number of States."

"The adoption of such resolution is sought with a view to embody it, with other propositions, in a proclamation looking to peace and reunion.

"Whereas, a joint resolution has been adopted by Congress, in the words following:

"Now, therefore, I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, do proclaim, declare, and make known, that on the conditions therein

stated, the power conferred on the executive in and by said joint resolution will be fully exercised ; that war will cease and armies be reduced to a basis of peace. that all political offenses will be pardoned ; that all property, except slaves, liable to confiscation or forfeiture, will be released therefrom, except in cases of intervening interests of third parties ; and that liberality will be recommended to Congress upon all points not lying within executive control."

(Indorsement.)

"February 5, 1865. To-day these papers, which explain themselves, were drawn up and submitted to the Cabinet and unanimously disapproved by them.

A. LINCOLN."

Serious as were all the issues involved in the question of slavery he did not entirely lose his sense of humor when dealing with it. In an address to an Indiana regiment, on its way home from the front after completing its term of service, he said:

"There are but few aspects of this great war on which I have not already expressed my views by speaking or writing. There is one—the recent effort of ‘our erring brethren,’ sometimes so called, to employ the slaves in their armies. The great question with them has been, ‘Will the negro fight for them?’ They ought to know better than we, and doubtless do know better than we. I may incidentally remark, that having in my life heard many arguments—or strings of words meant to pass for arguments—intended to show that the negro ought to be a slave—if he shall now really fight to keep himself a slave, it will be a far better argument why he should remain a slave than I have ever before heard. He, perhaps, ought to be a slave if he desires it ardently enough to fight for it. Or, if one out of four will, for his own freedom, fight to keep the other three in slavery, he ought to be a slave for his selfish meanness. I have always thought that all men should be free ; but if any should be slaves, it should be first those who desire it for themselves, and secondly those who desire it for others. Whenever I hear any one arguing for slavery, I feel a strong impulse to see it tried on him personally."

HIS METHOD OF DEALING WITH THE ARMY.

Next in importance after this vital question was his attitude toward the army and its relations to the practical conduct of the war. Without military experience or

knowledge of his own he yet treated his position as Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy seriously, as involving him in a responsibility which he would neither shirk nor surrender. He was constantly beset with demands to make the army a partisan body and as consistently refused.

It would be impossible, even were it necessary or desirable, to exaggerate the petty narrow jealousies and quarrels, which—in a regular army would have been seriously punished as acts of insubordination—were dealt with as a schoolmaster would have done in the management of a set of unruly boys. No rank was too high to evoke differences and dissensions discreditable to the actors and illuminative of human nature. And yet he showed the utmost forbearance, not making an example of the offenders in even a single case, but setting himself the serious task of composing such quarrels in the confident hope and expectation that the good of the service would thus be promoted. With some of his contentious warriors he took a strong line, while with others he used his gift of humor to shame them out of their jealousies, or to lecture them for the unreasonable demands they made upon him. In November, 1862, he wrote as follows to General Nathaniel P. Banks about his projected campaign in Louisiana :

“ Early last week you left me in high hope with your assurance that you would be off with your expedition at the end of that week, or early in this. It is now the end of this, and I have just been overwhelmed and confounded with the sight of a requisition made by you which, I am assured, cannot be filled and got off within an hour short of two months. I enclose you a copy of the requisition. in some hope that it is not genuine—that you have never seen it. My dear general, this expanding and piling up of impedimenta has been, so far, almost our ruin, and will be our final ruin if it is not abandoned.

“ If you had the articles of this requisition upon the wharf, with the necessary animals to make them of any use, and forage for the animals, you could not get vessels together in two weeks to carry the whole, to say nothing of your twenty thousand men ; and, having the vessels, you could

not put the cargoes aboard in two weeks more. And, after all, where you are going you have no use for them. When you parted with me you had no such ideas in your mind. I know you had not, or you could not have expected to be off so soon as you said.

"You must get back to something like the plan you had then, or your expedition is a failure before you start. You must be off before Congress meets. You would be better off anywhere, and especially where you are going, for not having a thousand wagons doing nothing but hauling forage to feed the animals that draw them, and taking at least two thousand men to care for the wagons and animals, who otherwise might be two thousand good soldiers. Now, dear general, do not think this is an ill-natured letter; it is the very reverse. The simple publication of this requisition would ruin you."

To General Curtis in Missouri, he wrote in January, 1863, in an endeavor to compose this General's unending quarrels with the Governor of Missouri:

"Now, my belief is that Governor Gamble is an honest and true man, not less so than yourself; that you and he could confer together on this and other Missouri questions with great advantage to the public; that each knows something which the other does not; and that acting together you could about double the stock of pertinent information."

Occasionally he issued orders which had that quaintness and recognition of the humor of a situation which often distinguished his conversation. One of these was a telegram sent on January 24th, 1865, to General G. M. Dodge, in which he said:

"It is said an old lady in Clay County, Missouri, by name Mrs. Winifred M. Price, is about being sent South. If she is not misbehaving, let her remain.—A. LINCOLN."

While he was never in the field, he soon became, and that without any interference, a real commander-in-chief engaged in both an offensive and a defensive war. Quite as much depended upon a knowledge and an oversight of political conditions in every field where a military campaign was in progress as upon the drilling and movements of the armies themselves. He had to watch his

generals, and not only to see that they were supplied with troops in all the various degrees of service and discipline, but to prevent them from interfering with the imperfectly restored civil authority. He kept himself in touch, constantly, with a large number of men whom he must trust with his power, although he knew little about them, or their abilities and ambitions.

Still, he found time to consider the review of courts martial, to save privates from condign punishment for sleeping at their posts or other military offenses, as well as to settle differences between officers. How he ever found time, even with his unwearied diligence, to do all these things, passes understanding, but apparently nothing was overlooked or neglected which could promote the interests of real justice—stripped, so far as lay in his power, of the technicalities incident to the laws of war of which our people knew so little. Even then he did not content himself with a mere approval or disapproval of a verdict, but showed an insight into the philosophy of a case. When he had occasion, once, to reprimand an officer for a quarrel he wrote :

“ The advice of a father to his son, ‘ Beware of entrance to a quarrel, but being in, bear it that the opposer may beware of thee ! ’ is good but not the best. Quarrel not at all. No man resolved to make the most of himself can spare time for personal contention. Still less can he afford to take all the consequences, including the vitiating of his temper and the loss of self-control. Yield larger things to which you can show no more than equal right ; and yield lesser ones though clearly your own. Better give your path to a dog than be bitten by him, in contesting for the right. Even killing the dog would not cure the bite.”

No man ever had to deal with so many political Generals, or so many men with whom military service was an incident to civil ambitions. Representing a political party which had not yet found itself, and so was without the discipline incident to age and perfect organization, there was in it a strong element which opposed all soldiers

who did not profess the most noisy allegiance. They were willing enough that revolt should be put down if they could assure the credit of it to their party or themselves. And yet, owing to the very newness of their party, it was natural that only the smallest proportion of the trained officers of the army—the men who, in the end must do the work—should have been found in its membership. The soldiers upon whom reliance had to be placed in the end were, in the main, those who as young men had seen service fifteen years before in the Mexican War. As that was a war, with which the President's new party had had nothing to do, because it was not then in existence, the majority of the efficient soldiers were found among his opponents. So, from the very beginning, he realized that to command success he must get away from party with the result that he became a non-partisan, so far as the Army was concerned.

Sight is often lost of the fact that nearly every regular soldier upon whom Lincoln had to rely after the retirement of General Scott had opposed his election to the Presidency. Practically every commander of a successful army belonged to this class, and almost as certainly each one had to be sustained by the President from an opposition the violence of which cannot now be fully understood. He was thus placed in the difficult position of encouraging and standing by the soldiers upon whom he must depend for military success and of meeting the demands of his own partisans. It is here that he showed his true greatness. If men ever had the "square deal" it was those who obtained from Lincoln the support they needed and deserved, and that, too, in the face of pressure the force of which cannot be realized if it is studied only in the cold facts of history. It requires the most active imagination and the most effective knowledge of human nature fully to realize the conditions then so nobly met and conquered. Some insight is given into the conditions by the following extract from Lincoln's letter of November

24, 1862, to Carl Schurz, then one of the most pushing and critical of the generals with whom he had to deal :

"I wish to disparage no one—certainly not those who sympathize with me ; but I must say I need success more than I need sympathy, and that I have not seen so much greater evidence of getting success from my sympathizers than from those who are denounced as the contrary. It does seem to me that in the field the two classes have been very much alike in what they have done and what they have failed to do. In sealing their faith with their blood, Baker and Lyon and Bohlen and Richardson, Republicans, did all that men could do ; but did they any more than Kearney and Stevens and Reno and Mansfield, none of whom were Republicans, and some at least of whom have been bitterly and repeatedly denounced to me as secession sympathizers ? I will not perform the ungrateful task of comparing cases of failure."

No note of personal triumph was heard during these four long, eventful years. He was not himself merely but the instrument, in the hands of God, of a work which he believed it necessary to do. He gave no pain to any opponent so long as he deemed him honest and faithful to the great object in view. He did not resent criticism even when it was unfair, and never retorted in kind. He was wholly free from violence in speech or writing. He called no names and showed here, as elsewhere, a genial philosophy. This is well shown by the following extract from a letter written in November, 1863, to the actor Hackett :

"I have endured a great deal of ridicule without much malice ; and have received a great deal of kindness, not quite free from ridicule. I am used to it."

In a speech made on November 10, 1864, in reply to a serenade complimenting him upon his re-election, he did not forget even in the hour of triumph that there were those who had honestly opposed his candidacy. So he took occasion to impress this fact upon his friends in the very moment of their exultation, saying to them :

"Now that the Election is over may not all having a common interest reunite in a common effort to save our common country ? For my part, I

have striven and shall strive to avoid placing any obstacle in the way. So long as I have been here I have not willingly planted a thorn in any man's bosom. While I am duly grateful, as I trust, to Almighty God for having directed my countrymen to a right conclusion, as I think, for their own good, it adds nothing to my satisfaction that any other man may be disappointed or pained by the result. May I not ask those who have not differed with me to join with me in this same spirit towards those who have?"

Nor, in his necessary devotion to war did he forget that behind this were the occupations and interests of peace. In his Thanksgiving Proclamation of October 3, 1863, he said :

"Needful diversions of wealth and of strength from the fields of peaceful industry to the national defence have not arrested the plow, the shuttle, or the ship; the axe has enlarged the borders of our settlements, and the mines, as well of iron and coal as of the precious metals, have yielded even more abundantly than heretofore. Population has steadily increased, notwithstanding the waste that has been made in the camp, the siege, and the battle-field, and the country, rejoicing in the consciousness of augmented strength and vigor, is permitted to expect continuance of years with large increase of freedom."

HIS ATTITUDE TOWARDS RECONSTRUCTION.

There has been much discussion about the probable methods of reconstruction which would have found adoption and enforcement if Lincoln had lived to serve out his second term. While nothing is more idle than speculation about the opinions or actions of dead men upon public questions arising a generation after their death, there can be little room for doubt or question about Lincoln's attitude upon the problems presented by the close of the Civil War. His consistent, unyielding position in favor of unity; his readiness to consider overtures from any constituted authority looking to the reunion of elements, temporarily discordant; his personal kindness; his control over the advocates of extreme measures; and the comprehensive philosophy of his life, all indicate

what he would and could have done to restore the most perfect harmony possible.

But we are not left wholly at sea, because his opinions were expressed with much freedom at every stage of the conflict. I may, perhaps, be permitted to quote some of these, choosing those least well known, or the less frequently quoted, and submitting them without much comment. In a letter written on November 21, 1862, to Governor Shepley of Louisiana—where the earliest experiments at reconstruction were tried—we can easily see how short would have been the shrift meted out to the carpet-bagger, whose image even thus early was projected upon the screen :

“Dr. Kennedy, bearer of this, has some apprehension that Federal officers not citizens of Louisiana may be set up as candidates for Congress in that State. In my view there could be no possible object in such an election. We do not particularly need members of Congress from there to enable us to get along with legislation here. What we do want is the conclusive evidence that respectable citizens of Louisiana are willing to be members of Congress and to swear to support the Constitution, and that other respectable citizens there are willing to vote for them and send them. To send a parcel of Northern men here as representatives, elected, as would be understood (and perhaps really so) at the point of the bayonet, would be disgusting and outrageous : and were I a member of Congress here, I would vote against admitting any such man to a seat.”

As showing his determination to get away from military authority and back to the civil law, he telegraphed to General Pope on February 12, 1865 :

“I understand that provost-marshals in different parts of Missouri are assuming to decide that the conditions of bonds are forfeited, and therefore are seizing and selling property to pay damages. This, if true, is both outrageous and ridiculous. Do not allow it. The courts, and not provost-marshals, are to decide such questions unless when military necessity makes an exception.”

Escaping from the intricacies or demands of law or politics he is found on February 20, 1865, writing to Gov-

ernor Fletcher, of Missouri, a letter in which he expresses all the philosophy of peace :

" It seems that there is now no organized military force of the enemy in Missouri. and yet that destruction of property and life is rampant everywhere. Is not the cure for this within easy reach of the people themselves ? It cannot but be that every man not naturally a robber or cut-throat would gladly put an end to this state of things. A large majority in every locality must feel alike upon this subject ; and if so, they only need to reach an understanding one with another. Each leaving all others alone solves the problem ; and surely each would do this but for his apprehension that others will not leave him alone.

" Cannot this mischievous distrust be removed ? Let neighborhood meetings be everywhere called and held, of all entertaining a sincere purpose for mutual security in the future, whatever they may heretofore have thought, said, or done about the war, or about anything else. Let all such meet and, waiving all else, pledge each to cease harassing others, and to make common cause against whoever persists in making, aiding, or encouraging further disturbance. The practical means they will best know how to adopt and apply. At such meetings old friendships will cross the memory, and honor and Christian charity will come in to help. Please consider whether it may not be well to suggest this to the now afflicted people of Missouri."

Finally, in his very last public address, on April 11, 1865, when, with characteristic plainness, he discussed the question of reconstruction, it is easy to understand the insight, the patience, the philosophy and the strength with which he would have met the new demands upon him:

" We all agree that the seceded States, so called, are out of their proper practical relation with the Union, and that the sole object of the government, civil and military, in regard to those States is to again get them into that proper practical relation. I believe that it is not only possible, but in fact easier, to do this without deciding or even considering whether these States have ever been out of the Union, than with it. Finding themselves safely, at home, it would be utterly immaterial whether they had ever been abroad. Let us all join in doing the acts necessary to restoring the proper practical relations between these States and the Union, and each forever after innocently indulge his own opinion whether in doing the acts he brought the States from without into the Union, or only gave them proper assistance, they never having been out of it. The amount of constituency, so to

speak, on which the new Louisiana government rests, would be more satisfactory to all if it contained 50,000, or 30,000, or even 20,000, instead of only about 12,000, as it does. It is also unsatisfactory to some that the elective franchise is not given to the colored man. I would myself prefer that it were now conferred on the very intelligent, and on those who serve our cause as soldiers.

* * * * *

“ Now, if we reject and spurn them, we do our utmost to disorganize and disperse them. We, in effect, say to the white man : You are worthless or worse ; we will neither help you, nor be helped by you. To the blacks we say : This cup of liberty which these, your old masters, hold to your lips we will dash from you, and leave you to the chances of gathering the spilled and scattered contents in some vague and undefined when, where, and how. If this course, discouraging and paralyzing both white and black, has any tendency to bring Louisiana into proper practical relations with the Union, I have so far been unable to perceive it. If, on the contrary, we recognize and sustain the new government of Louisiana, the converse of all this is made true. We encourage the hearts and nerve the arms of the 12,000 to adhere to their work, and argue for it, and proselyte for it, and fight for it, and feed it, and grow it, and ripen it to a complete success. The colored man, too, in seeing all united for him, is inspired with vigilance and energy, and daring, to the same end. Grant that he desires the elective franchise, will he not attain it sooner by saving the already advanced steps toward it than by running backward over them? Concede that the new government of Louisiana is only to what it should be as the egg is to the fowl, we shall sooner have the fowl by hatching the egg than by smashing it.”

In like manner, we can predict with reasonable certainty how he would have met a disputed Presidential Election even if he himself had been an interested candidate. On February 8, 1865, he sent to Congress the following message :

“ To the Honorable the Senate and House of Representatives : The joint resolution, entitled “ Joint resolution declaring certain States not entitled to representation in the electoral college,” has been signed by the executive, in deference to the view of Congress implied in its passage and presentation to him. In his own view, however, the two Houses of Congress, convened under the twelfth article of the Constitution, have complete power to exclude from counting all electoral votes deemed by them to be illegal ; and it is not competent for the executive to defeat or obstruct that power by a veto, as would be the case if his action were at all essential

in the matter. He disclaims all right of the executive to interfere in any way in the matter of canvassing or counting electoral votes; and he also disclaims that, by signing said resolution, he has expressed any opinion on the recitals of the preamble, or any judgment of his own upon the subject of the resolution."

This seems, after the passage of all the years, to echo anew the declaration made by Lincoln on July 1, 1848, when, as a partisan, he was expressing his opinion of the position that General Taylor, then a candidate for President, should take as to his relations to the legislative branch of our government. It might well be remembered even sixty years after:

"Were I President, I should desire the legislation of the country to rest with Congress, uninfluenced by the Executive in its origin or progress, and undisturbed by the veto unless in very special and clean cases."

We are, therefore, forced to conclude that the bullet of a madman did more than remove from the world a strong, patient, enduring man whose unselfishness and patriotism had been proven: it also unloosed the wild men of the Cabinet and Congress; displaced caution; enthroned partisanship, hatred, and greed; and gave the vultures of politics, the chance for which they had so long waited. As the result of this tragedy, pestilence followed war in all the South and corrupt influences and powers were generated which have not yet lost their strength.

HIS INHERENT SENSE OF HUMOR.

We are now dealing with one of the most serious minds in the history of our country. Few men have had about them so little of the jester and the same time so much of the real philosopher who can always see deeper into the inherent humor of things than any other man. That his ancestry, training and environment should have given him a point of view different from the man brought

up in more settled surroundings, was inevitable. But his quaint way of expressing, at times, an ordinary opinion, was the natural outcome of his sadness as well as of his surroundings. It was the working out of the unconventional and it generally announced a principle while it expressed an idea. It may not be amiss to quote a few of the less commonly known of the odd forms used by him at various times.

In giving a letter to Edward Everett for use abroad during a trip in 1862, he said :

"While I commend him to the consideration of those whom he may meet, I am quite conscious that he could better introduce me than I him in Europe."

In preferring, on March 6, 1865, a request to the Secretary of State for some patronage, his letter took this form :

"I have some wish that Thomas D. Jones of Cincinnati, and John J. Piatt, now of this City, should have some of those moderate sized consulates which facilitate artists a little in their profession. Please watch for chances."

When on January 22, 1862, he concluded that he did not want a body-guard, he communicated thus with the Secretary of War :

"On reflection, I think it will not do, as a rule, for the adjutant-general to attend me wherever I go : not that I have any objection to his presence, but that it would be an uncompensating encumbrance both to him and me. When it shall occur to me to go anywhere, I wish to be free to go at once, and not to have to notify the adjutant-general and wait till he is ready. It is better, too, for the public service that he shall give his time to the business of his office ; and not to personal attendance on me."

When he desired to give his opinions of the Pilgrims, while sending to Joseph H. Choate his regrets in December, 1864, he condensed it into these two sentences :

"The work of the Plymouth emigrants was the glory of their age. While we reverence their memory, let us not forget how vastly greater is our opportunity."

The example set in the following letter of January 19, 1865, to General Grant, about his son, might be commended to all men who bear any kind of relation to public office or to artificial power of any kind :

“Please read and answer this letter as though I was not President, but only a friend. My son, now in his twenty-second year, having graduated at Harvard, wishes to see something of the war before it ends. I do not wish to put him in the ranks, nor yet to give him a commission to which those who have already served long are better entitled and better qualified to hold. Could he, without embarrassment to you, or detriment to the service, go into your military family with some nominal rank, I, and not the public, furnishing his necessary means? If no, say so without the least hesitation, because I am as anxious and as deeply interested that you shall not be encumbered as you can be yourself.”

When called out to make a serenade speech on December 6, 1864, his quaint, curious opening might with pertinence be commended to a good many men, high as well as low, of the present day :

“I believe I shall never be old enough to speak without embarrassment when I have nothing to talk about.”

METHODS OF WORK.

Although Lincoln's career is only a little more than forty years behind our own, some interesting changes may be noted. The modern letter or speech of acceptance has become as portentous as the decrees of an oracle. After each of his nominations, Lincoln indicated his acceptance of them in letters, neither of which contained more than two hundred words. Inaugural addresses of all kinds, now include the history of many things very well known to most intelligent persons. Lincoln's first inaugural—perhaps the most vitally important in all our history—because it was an attempt to avert war—ran to the modest length of three thousand five hundred words, while his second contained only six hundred. His annual messages averaged from four thousand to five thousand

words—the longest reached only seventy-five hundred—while the speeches made during his Presidency ranged from two hundred to one thousand words in length, that made on the battlefield of Gettysburg falling considerably short of two hundred.

Nor can we understand his methods of work. Every letter, paper, address, proclamation, or document of any kind, was not only carefully written out in his own hand, but he made copies of them in the same way. Thus the record of his public career is almost as purely personal and intimate as is his domestic or business life. It may be said in explanation of this feature of his work, that it was not then deemed the duty of a President to regulate the multifarious affairs of an ingenious and progressive people. Most things were left to the ordinary operation of laws, traditions and customs, so well established that no outside interference was either invited or necessary. His attitude towards the disputed question of governmental interference was well expressed upon the inscription of the medal paid for in France and sent to his widow. "Lincoln—the honest man; abolished slavery, re-established the Union: saved the Republic without veiling the Statue of Liberty." Nothing is more certain that, whether in peace or in war, this was the one commendation which he would have prayed that he might deserve and receive.

THE ELEMENTS AND LESSONS OF HIS CAREER.

I have dealt with the character and life of a great figure in the world's history, without any attempt at declamation or the critical analysis which might well benefit other men or a different occasion. We have been dealing with a man who, seeing before him a duty, tried to do it with a single-minded purpose. Perhaps more than any other man in our later history, he combined those qualities of growth, progress, and caution which consti-

tute the true conservative. Before he would consent to adopt "new views" he must be convinced that they were "true views." This was the keynote of his character: the sign by which he conquered. He realized that a democratic people never can deal with more than one important question at a time and, as the responsibility was upon him to save the Union, he put his heart, his mind, his soul, his very life into the effort, and died upon the threshold of success. Throughout, there was that terrible sense of responsibility: stoic, Puritan, pioneer American, Christian in its character. He did not dream dreams, or set up impossible ideals. Recognizing the limitations of humanity, he sought to meet them by doing the best real things that were attainable. When judged by his associates and fellow-partisans, he was always holding them back: looked at from the point of view of the average of humanity, he was leading them forward to heights beyond their sight. He looked forward with the unfailing prescience of the prophet: backward with the cool judgment of a man whom contact with the world had taught wisdom.

Looking upon himself as old before he reached forty, he ripened to the last. There was never any loss of vigor but every thing he did even to the end had behind it the growing momentum of inherent power, the driving force of common sense. He was thus always a growing man. He grew out of early discouragements. He grew gradually, but surely, into a knowledge of men because he was with them and of them. He grew into just that understanding of his time which enabled him to see its needs, and he came to this knowledge by an industry, a care in study and act seldom seen among men. He grew continually into character, into a settled sadness, into a sincerity that revealed his innate honesty, into ability to touch the right chord in men so that they responded to his touch. He grew into recognition of the weakness of the partisan, the radical, the extreme, the fanatic, and in

response to this steady growth he was able to lead a sane people along the paths of principle, ideas, morals, into a safe harbor.

It is incumbent upon us—as men and women, as a people, as a nation—to study the true Lincoln. We have no need for myths. We are not falling down, as the idolator does, to worship. We need to understand that, dealing with a man, we as men need to know and understand him as a man, not as some legendary figure standing out and above us in some far-off sublimated atmosphere, but as one who once moved, talked and wrought among us and for us. I commend to you the fuller study of such a spirit, not as something perfect, or ethereal, or spiritualized, but as a real man who did what in him lay to deal with the actual facts of human life as they came before him.

